

# WASATCH FRONT

## Utah's Commercial Epicenter

By Janine S. Creager

There was a time when the communities along Utah's Wasatch Front existed largely independent of one another, each maintaining its own commercial, cultural and economic district. But those days are long gone, as the borders of these local cities now transition seamlessly from one to the other. The Wasatch Front of today, which includes the counties of Salt Lake, Tooele, Davis, Weber and Morgan, is now a rich blend of history, talent and skill that affects all who reside and work within its boundaries.

### THINKING AND ACTING REGIONALLY

Of Utah's capital city and the region round about, American historian and novelist Wallace Stegner wrote, "The homesickness was not merely for Salt Lake, a city in a valley under the lee of mountains, with the glint of the lake off westward, but for a whole region, a whole lifetime of acclimatization and expectation" (from *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs*.)

The Salt Lake Chamber features Stegner's commentary in its recent publication, *A New Vision for Salt Lake City: Downtown Rising*. "Downtown Rising is a living vision—a principle of vigilance, updated and supplemented over time," explains Lane Beattie, president of the Salt Lake Chamber.



SALT LAKE CITY COUNTY BUILDING

### FAST FACTS:

**Counties:** Salt Lake, Davis, Tooele, Weber, Morgan

**Major Cities:** Salt Lake City (178,097), West Valley City (118,917), Layton (61,782), Sandy (93,919), West Jordan (91,444), Ogden (78,309), Bountiful (41,085), Roy (35,229), Tooele (28,369)

**Regional Civilian Labor Force:** 779,416

**Per Capita Income:** \$32,983 (Salt Lake), \$29,357 (Davis), \$21,576 (Tooele), \$27,635 (Weber), \$24,715 (Morgan)

**Major Employers:** : University of Utah, Intermountain Health Care, State of Utah, Discover Financial Services, Wal-Mart, Salt Lake City Corp., Delta Airlines, Zions Bank, Hill Air Force Base, Lagoon Corporation Inc., Lifetime Products, Department of Defense, Autoliv, Convergys, Browning, Holcim US Inc.

**Average Sale Price of Homes, Year End 2006:**

Davis-\$227,819; Morgan-\$302,665; Salt Lake-\$269,714; Tooele-\$171,548; Weber-\$166,692



Downtown Rising is patterned after the Second Century Plan, envisioned in 1962, which included projects such as the Salt Palace, Abravanel Hall and City Creek Park. Although more than 40 years have come and gone, current chamber members are addressing many of the same questions, such as what do we all agree ought to be a part of our future and what should we leave behind as a legacy?"

While Downtown Rising focuses on a specific area, the plan affects more than just a few city blocks in Salt Lake City.

"There is a revival going on," says Beattie. "There is a hunger to unify and enormous goodwill to do something for the city." The Wasatch Front represents a strong, central city in the intermountain region, the state and the western United States as a center for baking, arts and culture and transportation. "It is very important that [downtown] be attractive, vibrant, and something that everyone is proud of," says Beattie.

The effort to bring communities

together throughout the greater Salt Lake area has been largely influenced by Envision Utah, a private partnership formed in 1997 with a vision to "protect Utah's environment, economic strength, and quality of life for generations to come."

"Envision Utah tried five years ago to [get cities to] work together on a regional plan and to get communities to think regionally," says Beattie.

### LOOKING OUTSIDE THE (DOWNTOWN) BLOCKS

The growth of Salt Lake County overall can easily be measured in the numerous master-planned developments springing up throughout the valley. The largest of these developments in the south end of the valley is Daybreak, a Kennecott Land development located in South Jordan, with a projected 14,000 homes to be built over the next 10 to 15 years. Other master-planned communities in the Salt Lake Valley include SunCrest, which sits on the Salt Lake and Utah county line in Draper City, and Rosecrest in Herriman.



MOUNTAIN GREEN, MORGAN COUNTY

"Kennecott is also looking at their other land, part of another plan called the West Bench Master Plan," says Jeff Edwards, president and CEO of the Economic Development Corporation of Utah. An ambitious plan, spanning nearly 100,000 acres, it is looking to meet personal and commercial needs 50 to 75 years into the future. Such a plan, adds Edwards, is "absolutely essential."

To the west of the Salt Lake Valley is Tooele County, a beautiful region bordered by the Oquirrh and Stansbury mountains. For years, living in Tooele County meant commuting into Salt Lake County for work, entertainment and shopping. But with phenomenal growth and opportunity taking place there, many residents are making the move west, where they can live, work and recreate.

"There are plenty of opportunities for Tooele," says Gary Harter, managing Director for the Clusters Initiative at the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED). As a former commander at Dugway, Harter adds that the Utah Industrial Depot (UID), built on 1,400 acres of the Tooele Army Depot, has been a huge success story for the region. The UID is a private facility with 2.5 million square feet of warehouse and manufacturing space.

While the Army Depot still employs about 600 people, in 1989, the number of employees was as many as 6,400. Many of those skilled workers still live in Tooele County, however, and commute into Salt Lake City for employment. Additional work opportunities in Tooele County will allow these workers to enjoy the benefits of working where they live.

To the north of downtown Salt Lake is Davis County, home to two of the most anticipated transportation projects along the Wasatch Front: Legacy Highway and Commuter Rail.

"Davis County has earned the reputation as the bottleneck of the Wasatch Front," says Davis County Chamber Director John Pitt. Beyond the two main projects, the county is also "looking at other transportation links" to help ease congestion through the county. In addition, transportation hubs will provide much needed access to these highway and rail options. Farmington Station, for example, will include commercial, retail and residential development in the middle of the county.

If there is one aspect of this region that symbolizes the combined growth of the Davis County and its neighbor to the north, Weber, it just might be Hill Air Force Base, which sits on federal land straddling the two.

Approval was given in the last legislative session for the Hill Air Force Base West Development, a business park and manufacturing area that will attract military and defense contractors, says Pitt. Bidding on the project will take place this fall.

Dave Hardman, president of the Ogden/Weber Chamber of Commerce, counts several Weber County companies, including Parker, Petersen Inc., and Barnes Aerospace, as significant players in the aerospace cluster in the area.

"(These companies) are updating and expanding to take advantage of new business," says Hardman. "We also anticipate further growth in aerospace, including more carbon graphite composite manufacturing."

Morgan County, located just east of Weber and Davis counties, is quite literally a breath of fresh air for many residents seeking to escape the more populous areas of the state.

"The air quality is so fantastic, and there's still so much open space," says Sherrie Christensen, community development director for Morgan County. While there are numerous smaller villages in the county, the main development is taking place in the cities of Morgan and Mountain Green, where 1,600 lots are currently under development. The county is also working on updating the central development district of the city to include a walkable community and a new interchange.

The county has the scenery and potential to become a desirable resort destination, yet is very much aware of the growth pains that can follow rapid development. "We have tried to develop a system that will allow limited growth in specific areas to maintain that rural feeling so we don't lose the character," says Christensen. "We're going to face some of the same issues and growth pains as other resort towns do. Our general plan calls for growth in specific areas. We feel we have a solid plan that protects other areas."

#### FOR THE FUN OF IT

The easy access to mountain resorts—11 of the state's 13 world-class ski resorts are within an hour's drive from Salt Lake International Airport—and the availability of sports, arts and cultural events throughout the region make the Wasatch Front a lifestyle destination for many residents and visitors. Salt Lake County boasts the NBA's Utah Jazz and Major League Soccer's Real Salt Lake, and is home to three major dance troupes, dozens of museums and theaters and the world-renowned Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

In the Ogden/Weber County area, many eyes are focused on the site of the former Ogden Mall, which was demolished in 2002. The Junction, a mixed-use site, will be completed during 2007 and will include theaters, a recreation center and commercial buildings.

"If Conference Center visitors are not up on the mountain or elsewhere,

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The Junction will give them something else to do," explains Hardman. "The Junction becomes a focal point. The result is really a unique opportunity and concept."

Morgan County enjoys some of the most stunning mountain scenery along the Wasatch Front. With easy access to reservoirs and ski resorts, and miles of roadway for bicyclists, the county is "a place to play and recreate," says Christensen. Plans are also under way for a major redevelopment of Round Valley Golf Course, located between Morgan City and Taggart, which will include 500 units as condos or timeshares.

Davis County, on the other hand, is home to Antelope Island, a distinctive environment located in the Great Salt Lake. The island affords visitors an opportunity to experience a desert habitat and view wildlife including antelope, buffalo, coyotes and bobcats, and is an important stopover in the United States for migrating birds. Pitt is especially pleased with the recent \$25,000 one-time funding by the legislature for the Antelope Island Bal-



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loon Festival held in September.

For fast-paced action, the place to be in Tooele County is the Miller Motorsports Park. The park features spectator events such as the American LeMans, AMA Superbikes and the NASCAR Grand National West Series, as well as participatory events through the park's driving schools and go-cart rentals. As the park evolves over the coming years, it will also spawn retail and commercial

properties that will continue to benefit the community.

With so many developments in place and planned for the future, Jason Perry, GOED executive director, is optimistic about the economic well-being of the counties located along the Wasatch Front.

"My outlook is very positive. We have some quality growth occurring, and the communities are well prepared for it," Perry says.

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